

VZCZCXRO3387
PP RUEHDE
DE RUEHAD #3903/01 2820406
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 090406Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7252
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 6507
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 003903

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/05/2016
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KMPI](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: UAE DEMOCRATIC REFORM STRATEGY: QUARTERLY PROGRESS
UPDATE (JULY-SEPT '06)

REF: A. ABU DHABI 3463

- [1](#)B. ABU DHABI 2881
- [1](#)C. ABU DHABI 2655
- [1](#)D. ABU DHABI 1327
- [1](#)E. ABU DHABI 16
- [1](#)F. 05 ABU DHABI 4113
- [1](#)G. 05 ABU DHABI 3043
- [1](#)H. 05 ABU DHABI 2173
- [1](#)I. 05 STATE 152818

ABU DHABI 00003903 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Martin Quinn, Reasons 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: During the summer months since the July submission of the quarterly UAE Democratic Reform Strategy update (ref B), planning for the indirect elections of the Federal National Council(FNC)moved forward with the establishment of an "electoral college" and a National Election Commission to oversee the elections. President Bush cited UAE's progress with elections in his September 19 UNGA address. Civil society reform continued to progress with the introduction of mandatory civics classes in primary and secondary schools, including sections on elections and civic participation. UAEG leaders articulated steps to limit extremist ideology from entering the schools. Although there was no movement on either media reform or judicial cooperation, UAEG officials expressed a desire to re-engage on Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty(MLAT) negotiations, which may include linkage with a Prisoner Transfer Treaty. End Summary.

Representative Government

[1](#)2. (U) On August 11, President Khalifa issued a decree formalizing the means of election of one-half of the 40-member Federal National Council(FNC), a move that was previously announced by Khalifa in December 2005. According to the decree, the ruler of each emirate must appoint a number of electors totaling at least one hundred times the number of representatives that emirate has on the FNC (which range between four and eight). The decree suggested that only the appointed electors would be eligible to compete as candidates in the elections. On Aug 15, Khalifa issued a second decree establishing a National Electoral Committee(NEC) to conduct and supervise the FNC elections. Minister of FNC Affairs Anwar Gargash publicly asserted that the elections would take place before the end of the year. On September 13 Gargash announced that the appointment of electors was complete and that an "electoral college" consisting of more than 6,000 members, over 1,000 of whom are women, had been established. The NEC also announced executive instructions for polling places and campaign

finance rules. It was reported on October 1 that the FNC elections will be held December 18-20, 2006. President Bush cited UAE progress in announcing that "half the seats in its Federal National Council will be chosen by elections" in his September 19 UNGA address.

Civil Society Development and Educational Reform

13. (U) In accordance with a December 2005 announcement by President Khalifa that Ministry of Education primary and secondary school curricula would be altered to include a democracy component, the 2006-07 academic year began in September with grades one through five, and nine and ten, using a reformed civics curriculum. The new curriculum reportedly introduces concepts such as sharing idea, opinions and beliefs and discussing the importance of civic participation. The topics of negotiation, democracy, and how elections work are introduced beginning in the sixth grade.

4.(U) On August 29, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed(MbZ) issued a decision naming the members of the municipal council for the Western Region of Abu Dhabi Emirate. For the first time ever, the Council includes two women among its 16 members. On September 24, the American University of Sharjah held elections for its student body president and a student council. The election marked the largest voter turn out since the University held its first election in 1998.

15. (C) During a July 29 lunch MbZ stated that the UAEG had stopped sending its Islamic Studies students to Saudi Arabia due to concern over the potential for proliferation of extremist views. Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed concurred adding, "We can't have radical Muslims running our schools."(ref A)

16. (U) In September, PAO awarded a grant for the 2006-07

ABU DHABI 00003903 002.2 OF 002

academic year UAE ACCESS Micro Scholarship Program to ELS Language Center in Dubai. The program awards 300 scholarships to students from remote cities and rural areas in Um Al-Quwain, Fujairah, and the Western Region of Abu Dhabi to receive 200 hours of instruction in American English including a curriculum of American government and history. A grant was also awarded to establish an online community consisting of Micro Scholarship alumni wherein the previous recipients could interact with one another and the Public Affairs Section could continue to engage them on issues such as democratization and civic participation.

Media Reform

17. (U) There has been no movement on the draft freedom of the press legislation that the UAE Journalists Association submitted to the Ministry of Information in February 2006.

Justice Reform

18. (C) During a September meeting hosted by Minister of Interior Sheikh Saif bin Zayed, MoJ Under Secretary Abdul Rahim Al-Awadi told Ambassador that the UAEG is awaiting a USG response to its last diplomatic note on continuing negotiations on a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT), which may include linkage with a Prisoner Transfer Treaty first proposed by the UAEG in 2002 (septel).

QUINN